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Substantive questions

Proposed medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005

Programme 23
Public information

Note by the Secretary-General

Introduction

1. The United Nations Secretariat is currently preparing the proposals for the medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005. As recommended by the Committee for Programme and Coordination, the General Assembly, in its resolution 53/207 of 18 December 1998, approved revisions to the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation. The attention of the Committee on Information is drawn to the following parts of the revised Regulations and Rules:

> "Regulation 4.2: The medium-term plan shall be a translation of legislative mandates into programmes and subprogrammes. Its objectives and strategies shall be derived from the policy orientations and goals set by the intergovernmental organs. It shall clearly reflect Member States' priorities as set out in legislation adopted by functional and regional intergovernmental bodies within their spheres of competence and by the General Assembly, on advice from the Committee for Programme and Coordination."

> "Regulation 4.8: The programmes and subprogrammes of the proposed medium-term plan shall be reviewed by the relevant sectoral, functional and regional intergovernmental bodies, if possible during the regular cycle of their meetings, prior to their review by the Committee for Programme and Coordination, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly. The Committee for Programme and Coordination and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions shall consider the proposed medium-term plan in accordance with their terms of reference."

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"Regulation 4.15: Specialized intergovernmental and expert bodies, when reviewing the relevant programmes of the medium-term plan within their sphere of competence, shall refrain from establishing priorities that are not consistent with the overall priorities in the medium-term plan."

2. The draft medium-term plan for programme 23, Public information, submitted herewith, contains the overall orientation of the Department of Public Information, the draft narrative of the subprogrammes on promotional services, information services, library services and publication services, and the main legislative mandates for the subprogrammes adopted by the relevant intergovernmental organs. Members of the Committee will recall that the first draft of the medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005 was submitted to the Committee for its consideration at its twenty-first session in 1999 (see A/AC.198/1999/8). The revised draft is being submitted to the Committee for its further review, with a view to receiving formal endorsement, as appropriate.

Programme 23
Public information

Overall orientation

23.1 The overall purpose of the programme is to increase awareness and understanding of the work and purposes of the United Nations among peoples of the world. In order to help build broad-based global public support for the Organization's goals, issues of concern to the international community, including those addressed by major international conferences and the special sessions of the General Assembly, are highlighted. The mandates for the programme are provided by the General Assembly, initially in its resolution 13 (I) of 13 February 1946, and subsequently in resolutions on questions relating to information, the most recent one being Assembly resolutions 54/82 A and B. Within the Secretariat, substantive responsibility for the programme is vested in the Department of Public Information.

23.2 The programme strategy is based on the premise that public information and communications should be placed at the heart of the strategic management of the United Nations and that a culture of communications should permeate all levels of the Organization as a means of fully informing the peoples of the world of the aims and activities of the United Nations. By enhancing public awareness and understanding of the goals and ideals of the United Nations, the Organization will be able to galvanize universal support for its objectives. To that end, emphasis will be placed on publicizing effectively and in a timely manner the activities of the Organization and the relevance of its work to the daily lives and concerns of people everywhere through the main target audiences, such as the media, non-governmental organizations, educational institutions, business and professional organizations and other segments of civil society. Particular attention will be given to the areas of special interest to developing countries and, where appropriate, to other countries with special needs, including African countries with economies in transition, in order to contribute to bridging the gap between developing and developed countries in the field of public information and communications.

23.3 In order to project an image of the Organization as an open and transparent public institution, emphasis will be placed on the continuing development of a culture of communications throughout the Organization. Partnerships will be strengthened at the Headquarters and field levels, which is essential to enable the Department to define the themes to be highlighted during the period of the medium-term plan and to coordinate the public information activities of the Organization with a view to presenting a unified image. Information and communications plans and campaigns will be implemented in collaboration with departments and offices to publicize the work of the Organization in their respective sectors. Cooperation among all organizations of the United Nations system will also be strengthened. Cooperation and partnerships with redisseminators will be pursued at all levels, both at Headquarters and in the field. The various elements of the system will work together in a more news-centred, media-friendly multimedia operation, providing information directly to international news editors in all Member States, including through the network of United Nations information centres, services and offices worldwide.

23.4 Increased use will be made of the latest technology, in both the traditional and electronic media, including the Internet, to deliver news directly and instantaneously to the media worldwide. Particular attention will be given to tailoring the news disseminated to different regions, bearing in mind their technological capacity.

23.5 Every effort will be made to ensure that publications and other information services of the Secretariat, including the United Nations web site, contain comprehensive, objective and equitable information about the issues before the Organization. Editorial independence, impartiality, accuracy and full compliance with resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly will be observed.

23.6 The Committee on Information provides overall guidance to the Department in its implementation of the programme.

Subprogramme 1
Promotional services

Objective

23.7 The objective of the subprogramme is to promote awareness of the central role of the United Nations and

its relevance to the lives of peoples everywhere in addressing the challenges facing humankind.

Strategy

23.8 Within the Department of Public Information, responsibility for implementing the subprogramme lies primarily with the Public Affairs Division, which is assisted by the Office of the Under-Secretary-General and the network of United Nations information centres and information services. The strategy is to manage the public image of the Organization effectively and to stimulate the development of a unified vision of the United Nations system at work. In this context, the Department will work closely with other substantive departments of the United Nations and with the organizations of the United Nations system to develop thematic information campaigns on priority issues of concern to the international community and to implement them at the international, regional and national levels. The campaigns will deal, in particular, with peace and security, including building a culture of peace and non-violence; economic and social development, including eradicating poverty, combating racism and promoting human rights and self-determination; and the question of Palestine.

23.9 To mobilize support for its information campaigns, partnerships with key constituencies, including the media, non-governmental organizations, educational institutions, professional and business organizations and other segments of civil society, will be strengthened. The network of information centres will also strengthen and expand partnerships with civil society at the national and local levels. The centres will forge closer links with educational organizations to reach students, including through the use of the Internet and videoconferencing where available. Special attention will be given to developing the CyberSchoolBus, the young people's segment of the United Nations web site, and transforming it into a locale where young people and teachers alike can converge for the purpose of facilitating teaching and learning about the United Nations and its activities through interactive web pages.

23.10 Direct outreach to the general public will be provided, *inter alia*, through the United Nations web site and through an informative experience for visitors to Headquarters and the offices in Geneva, Nairobi and Vienna. In order to convey the Organization's message to as wide an audience as possible, the six official languages and, to the extent possible, local languages at information centres, will be used in promotional activities.

23.11 Promotional services will include the issuance of public information materials, including booklets, pamphlets, fact sheets, wallcharts, information kits and press releases; the holding of press conferences and briefings; the organization of special events, such as observance of United Nations commemorative days and years, round tables for journalists and editors, seminars and workshops; the training of broadcasters and journalists from developing countries; and the organization of internship programmes. Electronic, audio and video technology will also be utilized. Exhibits, guided tours and lectures will be provided to highlight the work of the Organization.

Expected accomplishments

23.12 The public's understanding of and interest in the goals and objectives of the Organization would be enhanced, and public support for the work of the Organization would be strengthened.

Indicators of achievement

23.13 Indicators of achievement would include an increase in the level of interest shown by the target audience; an increase in the number of requests for and enquiries about the promotional products and services; an increase in the number of visitors to the United Nations web site; and an increase in the number of visitors to United Nations premises under the guided tour programme.

Subprogramme 2
Information services

Objective

23.14 The objective of this subprogramme is to increase the interest and access of news organizations and media to up-to-date news and other information about the Organization and its activities.

Strategy

23.15 Within the Department of Public Information, the responsibility for implementing the subprogramme lies primarily with the News and Media Division, which is assisted by the Office of the Spokesman of the

Secretary-General, the Office of the Under-Secretary-General and the United Nations information centres and information services. The changing needs of news organizations, the convergence of traditional media with the Internet and the capacity of new technology for instantaneous global communication will allow the direct delivery to the news media worldwide of breaking news and media products, including news packages for television and radio (including live transmissions) and complete multimedia coverage of United Nations activities.

23.16 In order to ensure faster access to news and other information about the Organization, a multimedia Internet news service, backed by an e-mail "news alert" service, direct delivery of radio broadcasts and the increased use of live radio and television feeds, will be developed. Video programming for use and dissemination over the Internet will also be developed.

23.17 Radio remains one of the most cost-effective and far-reaching media available to the Organization for the dissemination of information. United Nations radio and its outputs will be made more immediately available directly to both listeners and the mass media. The development of new communications technologies, such as webcasting, digital audio broadcasting, satellite distribution and direct satellite broadcasting, offer vast opportunities for widening the traditional reach of United Nations radio.

23.18 Work on the development, enhancement and enrichment of the United Nations web site in all official languages, and in local languages by the United Nations information centres, with the ultimate goal of accelerating the dissemination of information and data to a wider audience, will continue. The structure of the United Nations web site will be rationalized to render it more user-friendly and flexible.

23.19 In order to cope effectively with the fast pace of technology, particular attention will be paid to modernizing the technical and physical requirements of television, radio and photographic coverage through a transition to digital technology in all media.

Expected accomplishments

23.20 The expected accomplishments by the end of the plan period would include an increase in coverage of the Organization's goals and activities by the media organizations around the world and an increase in public awareness about the issues addressed by the Organization.

Indicators of achievement

23.21 Indicators of achievement would include an increase in the number of accesses and links from external sites to the United Nations news sites; an increase in the size of audience reached through redisseminating broadcasters and its geographical spread; an increase in the number of enquiries about and requests for news material; and positive feedback from the media organizations on the relevance and timeliness of news material provided.

Subprogramme 3
Library services

Objective

23.22 The objective of the subprogramme is to facilitate access to timely and up-to-date library products and services for use by delegates, permanent missions of Member States, the Secretariat, researchers and depository libraries worldwide.

Strategy

23.23 Responsibility for the subprogramme lies with the Library and Information Resources Division and the United Nations information centres and information services. By maintaining, preserving and making available an archival collection of United Nations documents, publications and oral history tapes and transcripts, the Division will facilitate access to and use of library services and supply bibliographic and factual information about the Organization and its work. The delivery of customized information directly to the users' desktops through Internet services will be expanded, and training to users (permanent missions, Secretariat staff and depository librarians) in the use of library services will be provided. In addition, access to commercially available electronic information services will be made available in a cost-effective way through the formation of a consortium of United Nations system organizations.

23.24 The capacity of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library will be increased through networking with other libraries. The United Nations depository libraries, numbering more than 350, will be further developed into effective channels of communication. The

electronic delivery of documents to depository libraries will be promoted where feasible to ensure rapid, complete and cost-effective document distribution. The network of United Nations libraries sharing responsibility for the indexing and preservation of United Nations documents will be strengthened. Technical assistance will be provided in the development of a unified United Nations library system at the country level.

23.25 In-house production and processing of data, including the production and issuance of updated standards and guidelines for bibliographic control, the issuance of multilingual reference tools and the updating of indexing terminology in the six official languages, will continue to be improved. Furthermore, work on the conversion of older United Nations documents in all languages from microfiche and paper to digital format for the purpose of uploading to the optical disk system and the United Nations web site will continue.

23.26 The Internet site of the Library as a major source of United Nations information will be enriched and further developed to the maximum extent possible in all six official languages, with multilingual retrieval capabilities. The major database, the United Nations Bibliographic Information System (UNBIS), will also use the Internet as its main platform for dissemination to the public.

Expected accomplishments

23.27 Expected accomplishments of the subprogramme would include faster and greater access by users to products and services of the Library.

Indicators of achievement

23.28 Indicators of achievement would include an increase in the number of requests and enquiries for the products and services of the Library, an increase in the number of visitors to the Library's web page and positive feedback from participants in training programmes on the effective utilization of the services of the Library.

Subprogramme 4
Publication services

Objective

23.29 The objectives of this subprogramme are to increase readership of United Nations publications in all formats and to increase understanding of the breadth of its activities.

Strategy

23.30 Responsibility for the subprogramme lies with the Library and Information Resources Division. The Division will provide publication services, including the development of policies and procedures for the production of print and electronic products, cartographic products, geographic information and graphic design as well as management of the publications programme. Increased use will be made of the evolving technology to improve the quality of graphic design and printing of all printed publications. The Publications Board will be strengthened so as to harmonize publication policies and to better monitor and coordinate the publication programme of the Organization.

23.31 The Division is responsible for the preparation and publication of the *Yearbook of the United Nations*, the *United Nations Chronicle*, *Africa Recovery* and *Development Business*. In addition to the printed versions, electronic access to the *United Nations Chronicle* and *Africa Recovery* web sites will be enhanced to increase readership. The *Yearbook of the United Nations* will also be made available for sale on CD-ROM. The availability of on-line subscriptions to *Development Business* will facilitate the timely dissemination of procurement opportunities and collaborative venture opportunities generated by projects implemented by organizations throughout the United Nations system.

23.32 Cartographic products and geographic information services in support of substantive activities of the Secretariat, including requirements of the Security Council, will be provided. A common United Nations geographic database, to be made accessible through web server technology, would be established and maintained. Efforts to strengthen multilingualism in print and electronic media would be continued.

Expected accomplishments

23.33 An expected accomplishment would be a greater interest in United Nations publications.

Indicators of achievement

23.34 Indicators of achievement would include an increase in the number of subscriptions to United Nations publications and in the number of publications sold and an increase in the number of visitors to the web sites of United Nations publications.

Legislative mandates

Programme 23
Public information

General Assembly resolutions

1086 (XI)	Public information activities of the United Nations
2897 (XXVI)	Review and appraisal of the United Nations information policies and activities
3047 (XXVII)	Revenue-producing activities
33/115 A	Questions relating to information
33/115 B	
33/115 C	
34/182	Questions relating to information
53/25	International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World (2001-2010)
53/78 E	United Nations Disarmament Information Programme
53/90	Implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s
53/183	Implementation of the Programme of the International Conference on Population and Development
53/243 A	Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace
53/243 B	
54/23	Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development
54/24	Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: a society for all ages
54/28	United Nations Decade of International Law
54/41	Special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat
54/64	Multilingualism
54/68	Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space
54/81	Comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects
54/82 A	Questions relating to information
54/82 B	
54/91	Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples

54/92	Dissemination of information on decolonization
54/113	United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations
54/120	Policies and programmes involving youth
54/121	Implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons: towards a society for all in the twenty-first century
54/122	United Nations literacy decade: education for all
54/124	Follow-up to the International Year of the Family
54/125	Tenth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders
54/132	International cooperation against the world drug problem
54/134	International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women
54/141	Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action
54/150	International Decade of the World's Indigenous People
54/154	Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination and the convening of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance
54/157	International Covenants on Human Rights
54/158	International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families
54/159	Elimination of all forms of religious intolerance
54/161	United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education, 1995-2004, and public information activities in the field of human rights
54/173	Strengthening the role of the United Nations in enhancing the effectiveness of the principle of periodic and genuine elections and the promotion of democratization
54/176	National institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights
54/206	Implementation of the commitments and policies agreed upon in the Declaration on International Economic Cooperation, in particular the Revitalization of Economic Growth and Development of the Developing Countries, and implementation of the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade
54/208	Implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II)

54/218	Implementation of and follow-up to the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly
54/224	Implementation of the outcome of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States
54/231	Role of the United Nations in promoting development in the context of globalization and interdependence
54/232	Implementation of the First United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty
54/235	Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s
54/248	Pattern of conferences (sect. E, Information technology)
54/249	Questions relating to the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001